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1914

THE WOMAN'S BOARD OF HOME MISSIONS AND WORK AMONG IMMIGRANTS.

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The attention of the women's missionary societies being directed during this season of 1913-'14 toward the Immigrants in the land, and to the question of the relation to them of the Christian Church, there will naturally follow queries as to the precise attitude of the Woman's Board of Home Missions toward work for these peoples.

In order that the present situation may be quite clear it is necessary to summarize briefly past actions of both General Assembly and the Woman's Board. In the search for such the first fact of interest that appears, is, that the Woman's Board of Home Missions (then the Woman's Executive Committee) antedated in expressed interest, action by General Assembly; for it is noted that in 1889 the latter body places itself on record that "so far as our church is concerned, there is no systematic effort to evangelize the foreigner in our land", while when the HOME MISSION MONTHLY, official organ of the Woman's Board of Home Missions, was established in 1887, the topic "Our Immigrant Population" was assigned for one month - prophetically anticipating the future. This is well worthy of note when one realizes that the Woman's Board was then but nine years old, and was struggling to meet the claims of fields already occupied by it; yet its leaders were far-sighted enough to grasp the added duty of service to these foreigners and urged it as a local and personal work upon its women.

In 1893 Overtures were made to General Assembly by the Presbyteries of Chicago and Lehigh asking for an "enlargement of the scope of the work of the Woman's Executive Executive Committee to include the educational work among the exceptional populations of large cities"; in its reply that body

said: "We recommend that in view of the delicate and complicated nature of the questions involved, this matter be referred to the Board."

The following year, 1894, there appeared in the Report of the Coresponding Secretary of the Woman's Board the following:

> "The step in advance which we have been led to take this year grows out of the overtures of two presbyteries to the Washington Assembly. The question of enlarging the scope of the Woman's Executive Committee to take in work among the exceptional foreign populations in large cities, or among such exceptional classes wherever found, being referred to the Board for action, resolutions were passed by the Woman's Executive Committee and School Committee of the Board, and adopted by the Board, which made it possible for the Home Missionary Society of the Presbytery of Chicago to add this department to their work, with the understanding that contributions to the general work were to be in no way lessened thereby, and that the entire care and financial support were to be assumed by the local committee. The whole statement and plan are as follows:
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> PLAN OF MISSION SCHOOLS IN CITIES.
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> "In view of the fact that the General Assembly has heretofore restricted the work of the Woman's Executive Committee to the exceptional populations of our country and the Mountain Whites of the South, and in view of the further fact that the work now carried on among these peoples calls for all the funds collected for school purposes, it is
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> "RESOLVED, 1st. That the Woman's Executive Committee deem it unwise to attempt at present any extensive systematic work among the foreign population of our great cities.
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> "RESOLVED, 2nd. That notwithstanding, when there is an exceptionally destitute foreign population in one of our large cities not supplied with religious instruction through any local agency, the Woman's Executive Committee is willing to include any schools established among such people as a part of their work, and to receive funds for their support, provided
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> "First.- That contributions to the work of the Woman's Executive Committee already assumed, or usually undertaken by the local society be not lessened thereby.
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> "Second.- That these schools shall be under the supervision of a local committee who shall be wholly responsible for their financial support, and faithful instruction in Scripture and the Westminster Catechism.
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> "Third.- That the Treasurer of the Board of Home Missions shall not pay the salaries of teachers or any other expenses connected with the work of these schools unless there be funds in the treasury specially provided for that purpose.
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> "Fourth.- That these, like the other schools, shall report quarterly to the Board of Home Missions and the Woman's Executive Committee."

It is again of interest to note that it was the <u>following</u> year, 1895, that General Assembly placed itself on record as recommending "to the Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions the work among the people of foreign tongues in the great cities, the mining regions of Pennsylvania and the West." The women were of keen interest, blazing the way loyally.

The years 1894 - '96 were peculiarly difficult years for the Woman's Board - owing to the withdrawal of Government aid in Indian schools, the general financial stringency in the country, and other causes, there was reported at the end of March 1896, a deficit of $161,000. This appalling indebtedness made advance impossible - further it called for retrenchment. While the share of the Woman's Board in the Million Dollar Fund (raised by General Assembly to aid in cancelling the debts of all the Boards) together with special gifts and field retrenchment, reduced this debt to $9000. by March 31, 1897, yet years were needed in which to recover from the effects of the cutting down, the neglect of buildings, etc.

In spite of this, in 1896, the Woman's Board announced as its only <u>new</u> work undertaken, four Kindergartens in Chicago.

But in the Report of the Corresponding Secretary, May, 1900, comes a note of warning: the enthusiasm the Board had helped to create, and had fostered, threatened to overwhelm it:

> "Our women's Home Missionary Societies, called into being by General Assembly, for specific, well-defined work, and <u>made the only agency</u> of the Presbyterian Church <u>for such a necessary work</u>, are besieged on all sides for kindred work of the church, synodical sustentation, temerpance work, local presbyterial and church obligations, city benevolent work and the like, to the distraction of conscientious workers who wish to be loyal to the trust committed to them and who find it hard to avoid positive diversion of their Home Mission funds - technically so called. Hence the vigilance

necessary to guard the steady support of the great system of mission training and industrial schools which the women have planted in answer to the call of their church and for which they are solely and wholly accountable."

Faith in the splendid loyalty of the constituency of the Woman's Board prevailed and at its Annual Meeting of 1902 the following Resolution was adopted:

> "RESOLVED, that in view of the presence among us, and particularly in our large cities and manufacturing districts, of millions of foreigners, ignorant of our language, our laws and our institutions, as well as of true religion, and utterly unfitted for the duties of citizenship suddenly thrust upon them, that we urge upon our constituency the need of greatly increased gifts for this work, and upon our Boards its prosecution with vigor.
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> "In view of the rapidly increasing immigration of illiterate people of Eastern Europe and Russia to our shores, and the consequent menace to our homes and nation, we note with joy the good work already begun in Pennsylvania among these people by our Woman's Board during the past year..... We therefore commend to other Synods having many of these foreigners in their bounds, prayerful consideration of their duty in giving these people evangelists and teachers."

There is, however, emphasis laid upon the basis originally agreed upon in 1894 - that "all gifts for work among foreigners should be an advance upon the previous total gifts of the societies, and that the Woman's Board should assume no financial responsibility beyond the amount designated for this work."

Each year the definite presentations by the Woman's Board of the claims of this field continued: in 1907 it urged that these be regarded until "the interest and gifts for work among foreign-speaking people are more nearly commensurate with its importance." In December, 1907,

> "An overture was received from the Board of Home Missions and the self-supporting synods expressing the conviction that the work among foreign-speaking people presented a most important field for the enlarging energies of the Woman's Board, and asking that some plan be adopted for the extension of the Woman's Home Mission work so that in co-operation with and agreeable to the plans of synods and presbyteries

this pressing need may be more adequately met.

The following reply was made to the overture:

> The Woman's Board heartily recommends to all auxiliary societies participation in work among the women and children of foreign-speaking people, and among the women and children employed in various industries and not provided with religious advantages.
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> It further recommends, That a year from the adoption of this report, in April, 1909, the Woman's Board shall appropriate an amount equal to at least five (5) per cent of all its receipts from women's auxiliary societies, for work among foreign-speaking — this per cent to be annually increased as the readjustment of the work will permit.
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> It further recommends that in each presbytery in which such work shall be undertaken in conjunction with the presbytery there shall be a joint committee from the presbytery and the presbyterial society, which committee shall recommend to the Woman's Board the location of the work, and the kind of work to be done.
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> Gifts of the women's missionary societies may go through the regular channels to the treasury of the Woman's Board, provided the location and kind of work shall be approved by the Board and the workers commissioned by the Board. The kinds of work recommended are: Bible readers, missionary nurses, kindergartens and schools - mission, evening, industrial, and so forth."

In May 1910 the Secretary of the Woman's Board was again forced to a note of warning:

> "The work among foreigners is one of the most difficult, one of the most fascinating missionary problems. The only condition upon which the Woman's Board will undertake work among foreigners is that money must be raised as an extra over and above the advance required for General Fund. Some presbyterial societies have done this; in others the regret is keen that this new work has been at the expense of the old, distinctively national missionary work, which causes a most embarrassing situation."

While the President of the Board reminded the women that there was needed an "Increase of twenty-five per cent in gifts in order to sustain the established work so as to secure the full utilization of its powers, to make needed repairs upon buildings, and to reap the results of our sowing."

Complications having arisen, a special committee on Work among Foreigners offered, at the Annual Meeting of 1910, the following Resolutions which were adopted:

> "1. For America's sake, for the foreigners' sake, we beg the women of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to awake to the importance of Christian work among these foreigners.
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> 2. We recommend that workers for the foreigners be commissioned by the Woman's Board of Home Missions, but that the work shall be under the direction of the presbyterial or synodical societies, sustaining it in conjunction with the Woman's Board, all final appeals to be made to the Woman's Board of Home Missions.
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> 3. We recommend that all funds for current expenses and salaries of kindergartners, Bible readers, Deaconesses and Industrial Teachers among foreign speaking people be sent through regular channels to the Treasurer of the Woman's Board of Home Missions: amount in excess of salaries to be returned, on receipt of statement, to the presbyterial treasurer, or to such authorized agent as designated, to be locally disbursed.
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> 4. That such money be in advance and in addition to the work already pledged."

The report of the Treasurer of the Woman's Board of March 31, 1912, reported thirty-three mission stations among foreigners, and the following figures:

Total amount of special returned in bulk, including amount deposited for balance due societies	$23,672.11
Total amount paid for salaries.	10,143.23
Grand total for Foreigners.	$33,815.34
Portion of $10,143.23 paid for salaries not provided for by societies, hence supplied from General Fund of the Woman's Board.	1,953.85

This amount was more than the 5 per cent promised by the Woman's Board.

During the winter of 1912-13 an examination of these thirty-three stations showed many forms of control, various arrangements with Presbyteries, and Committees of varying degrees of responsibility.

This great variety of administration led to embarrassments and such difficulties as made the adoption of a plan applicable to all Synods imperative. In the search for a scheme of administration two considerations were paramount:

1. That the Woman's Board should not set up such forms of administration as were at variance with the established custom of Presbyterial control of work within their own bounds, and

2. That the Woman's Board cannot enlarge the scope of its work in fields already occupied, and cannot undertake any new work without greatly increased gifts.

Twelve Synods have become self-supporting, and from the greater number of these the Board of Home Missions, has at their request, withdrawn its support; in these Synods a Synodical Home Mission Fund provides for the local work; in many cases the work of the women is closely allied to that of the Church Fund and the administration is vested in a joint Committee from Presbytery and the Presbyterial Society or from a local society.

In other Synods, not self-supporting, there is a similar bond of direction between Presbytery's Committee and that of the women; under such circumstances the Woman's Board neither engaged, controlled or discharged the worker - nor did it budget the station or have any financial responsibility therefor.

A further serious consideration arose in that the receipts of the Woman's Board showed an increase in gifts while at the same time it was curtailing its work - no recognition being given by the general reader of its

reports, to the fact that a goodly sum was annually being returned in bulk for local work among foreigners, and was not available for the work directly cared for by the Woman's Board. Most careful consideration had to be given to this fact, and also to the fairness of reporting in the final account an amount that was not controlled or administered by the Board. The matter received earnest consideration and culminated in May 1913, with the adoption at the Annual Meeting of the Woman's Board of the following Resolutions:

RESOLUTIONS AS TO WORK AMONG IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS.

Recognizing the necessity of aggressive work among the immigrant populations, the Woman's Board announces the following forward policy:

1. Work Directly Under Board.

1. As the work needed among immigrant populations has phases that can scarcely be met locally, or even synodically, the Woman's Board feels that it should act as direct agent in the following forms of service:

(a) The training of women for service in immigrant communities, both as foreign speaking visitors and directors of religious, social and educational work.

(b) The establishment of large and forceful centers of evangelizing and assimilating power at important ports of entry and industrial localities.

(c) The institution of work in smaller settlements, not in self-supporting synods, where there is no local agency to carry on work and where permission shall have been given by the Presbytery with the assurance that the Woman's Board may conduct the work on its regular lines.

(d) Christian Social Settlements.

(e) Vocational Boarding Schools.

2. Commissioned Workers.

Workers for these enterprises shall be commissioned by the Board and their work shall be under the direction and supervision of the School Department.

3. Maintenance.

(a) The Funds for this work shall be secured as are all other funds for the work of the Woman's Board, from organizations, individuals, legacies, etc., by the usual method.

(b) For work among Foreigners the Woman's Board engaged to expend annually in accordance with an agreement made in April, 1908, a sum equal to 5 per cent of the total annual receipts for current work from women's auxiliaries; this pledge has been more than fulfilled. As in the future the 5 per cent is to be based on a total in which is not included amounts transmitted under Resolutions II and III (following) which amounts formed the greater part of the 5 per cent for work among Foreigners, the fulfillment of this pledge on the new basis cannot be affected until funds for this work are in hand.

II. In Self-Supporting Synods.

The following is the plan of operation in self-supporting synods -

(a) Funds to be expended for work among Immigrant populations shall be sent to the Treasurer of the Woman's Board and shall be returned at once to the appointed authorities; but shall be acknowledged and recorded as a separate fund and shall be so reported at the close of the fiscal year. It is understood that funds contributed for work outlined in Par. I. are to be exempted from this provision.

(b) This work shall not be budgeted by the Woman's Board and shall not have any claims on the funds of said Board.

The amount expended shall be an advance over and above the sum required for the support of the national work.

(c) The workers shall not be commissioned but listed by the Board, and it shall have no supervision of such work.

III. In Synods Not Self Supporting.

Work not undertaken by the Woman's Board directly, shall be conducted on the same basis as in self-supporting synods.

PLAN AND SCOPE OF WORK AMONG IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS.

1. All work among immigrant populations done by the organizations auxiliary to the Woman's Board and by the Woman's Board itself shall be of a distinctly Christian character including a ministry to the spiritual and material needs of the people, the definite and constant aim always being to bring them to Christ, and to help and strengthen them in their daily living. All work will be carried on in closest sympathy with the purposes of the local Presbyterian Churches where such exist.

As the year's study of Immigration opens vistas of need, great avenues of service, each Presbyterian woman should carefully read the foregoing and acquaint herself with methods as well as needs, should weigh the claims of the local work among Immigrants, the general work for them, and

the national work of the Woman's Board for Indians, Mormons, Mountaineers, and others, and so distribute her gifts and her time as to help in the adequate meeting of the claims of all.

The Woman's Board has not receeded from its oft-expressed position of beseeching Presbyterian women to awake to the needs of these peoples. On that platform it yet stands, but it prayerfully urges those <u>increased gifts</u> that shall make enlargement on all these lines possible, and again it warns against such TRANSFERENCE OF FUNDS as shall cripple one station that another may be opened. A large view of <u>all the needs</u> of <u>all the fields</u> alone can adjust the rightful claims, and to the search for such the Woman's Board urges the auxiliaries.